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Message Text

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44
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 FEAE-00

INT-05 DLOS-04 OES-03 /093 W
---------- 007543
R 162230Z SEP 75
FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON
SECSTATE WASHDC 4348
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PBOR, GT, BH
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ON GUATEMALAN THREAT TO BELIZE

1. FOLLOWING EXCERPTS FROM SEPT 15 ARTICLE IN OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER REPORTER ARE ILLUSTRATIVE OF TYPE OF COVERAGE LOCAL PRESS HAS BEEN GIVING TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN UK-GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE.

2. ARTICLE, WHICH IS ENTITLED "BELIZE CELEBRATES TENTH DESPITE 'INVASION' CLOUD", DISCUSSES RUMORS OF GUATEMALAN TROOP BUILDUP WHICH WERE CIRCULATING DURING CELEBRATION AS FOLLOWS: "FOR A WHILE IT LOOKED LIKE THE GUATEMALANS WOULD DO SOMETHING FOOLISH TO SPOIL THE HOLIDAY. ALL DAY LONG ON TUESDAY, THE EVE OF THE TENTH, REPORTS BEGAN TO POUR IN OF A HEAVY BUILD-UP OF TROOPS AND TANKS ON THE GUATEMALAN FRONTIER IN AND AROUND THE LITTLE FRONTIER TOWN OF MELCHOR DE MENCOS."

3. PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TAKEN BY BRITISH FORCES ALSO RECEIVED DRAMATIC TREATMENT. "BELIZE PEOPLE ARE USED TO GUATEMALAN THREATS AND DO NOT USUALLY TAKE THESE SERIOUSLY, BUT WHEN IT BECAME KNOWN
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THAT THE BRITISH SOLDIERS OF THE AIRPORT AND HOLDFAST CAMPS HAD

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BEEN PUT ON MILITARY ALERT, A NOTE OF GENUINE CONCERN BEGAN CREEPING IN. AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BRITISH ARMY EXPERTS SWARMED OVER GUN EMPLACEMENTS, CHECKING AND ADJUSTING THESE IMPLEMENTS OF WAR AND CAMOUFLAGING THEM TO MAKE THEM LESS DISCERNABLE FROM THE AIR. ANOTHER GROUP OF SOLDIERS WHO WERE BIVOUACING IN THE MOUNTAIN PINE RIDGE PICKED UP THEIR TRAPPINGS AND MOVED OUT IN DOUBLE-QUICK TIME. REPORTS FROM ENGLISH CAYE LATE THAT EVENING SAID THE FRIGATE HMS MINERVA, WAS WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CAYE."

4. ATTITUDE OF GUATEMALAN POLITICAL FIGURES SUMMED UP BY QUOTING REMARK BY GUATEMALAN CONGRESSMAN CARPIO NICOLLE ALLEGEDLY MADE TO PRENSA LIBRE THAT "NOW IS THE TIME TO GO TO WAR FOR BELIZE, OR WE SHALL CERTAINLY LOSE IT."

5. ON NEW GUATEMALAN ACQUISITIONS OF MILITARY HARDWARE, ARTICLE STATES "GUATEMALA HAS FOUND NEW CONFIDENCE IN HER MILITARY HARDWARE. RECENTLY SHE HAS ACQUIRED NEW GUNBOATS FOR HER NAVY AND NEW AIRCRAFT OF THE STOL (VERTICAL TAKE-OFF) TYPE. IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR THE AERONAUTICS INDUSTRY OF ISRAEL ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS SELLING AN UNDISCLOSED NUMBER OF ISRAELI-BUILT ARAVA MILITARY AIRCRAFT (TWO MOTOR JETS) TO MEXICO, GUATEMALA, ECUADOR AND NICARAGUA. THE ARAVA, WHICH HAS A RANGE OF 780 KILOMETERS, CAN TRANSPORT 14 COMBAT-READY SOLDIERS."

6. RE POSSIBILITY OF OIL, ARTICLE AVERS THAT "GUATEMALA IS ALSO BEEN ON BELIZE BECAUSE THE LATEST REPORTS SHOW THAT THERE MAY BE SUBSTANTIAL UNDERWATER DEPOSITS OF OIL OFF BELIZE'S CONTINENTAL SHELF. GUATEMALA AND OTHER THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES ARE PRESSURING FOR A 200 MILE SEA LIMIT, AND IF THIS COMES ABOUT, BELIZE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BECOME A COUNTRY WITH SUBSTANTIAL NATURAL MARINE AND UNDER-WATER RESERVES."

7. SUMMING UP, WRITER CONCLUDES THAT "FOR THESE REASONS GUATEMALA HAS CAST A VERY COVETOUS EYE ON BELIZE. FOR ALMOST IDENTICAL REASONS THE PREMIER OF BELIZE HAS VEERED AWAY FROM HIS PRO-GUATEMALAN LEANINGS IN THE HOPE THAT HE WILL SOMEDAY BECOME THE BOSS OF A VERY WEALTHY LITTLE COUNTRY, NAMELY BELIZE."

8. DECLASSIFY UPON RECEIPT.
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Disposition Authority: ShawDG
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To: LONDON GUATEMALA
Type: TE
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